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ABSTRACT

The recent emergence of graduate education as a major issue in statewide planning and coordination is discussed, including involvements not only of institutions and state higher education agencies, but also legislatures and, in some states, even the executive branch. Most of the issues of mutual concern to the academic community and to government result from fiscal restraints, diminishing resources, student demographics, and changing priorities. The issues involve basic questions about the structure and governance of higher education. The most frequently discussed issues are (1) whether there are too many graduate level programs and too many graduates, (2) the priority assigned to graduate education and research, and (3) the question of educational quality, both of graduate programs and of the students. It is suggested that: better mechanisms be developed for reallocating resources internally to assure support for quality programs that are socially desirable and needed, not simply esoteric and prestigious; interinstitutional and interstate cooperation be increased to maximize education resources and meet student needs; and the use of labor supply and demand projections in educational planning be developed. Although all facets of state governments would generally prefer that most educational decision-making remain at the institutional or systemwide level, those institutions must be willing to make the policy decisions made necessary by changing public needs and circumstances. (SC)

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Project on Expanding Regional Cooperation in Graduate & Professional Education

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WICHE

Improving Education in The West

WICHE

The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education is a nonprofit agency created in the 1950s by the governors and legislatures of the 13 western states. Through interstate sharing and research, WICHE helps states provide high-quality, cost-effective higher education to meet the human resource needs of the states and the education needs of the citizens. WICHE serves Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

Project Intent

WICHE's project on Expanding Regional Cooperation in Graduate and Professional Education encourages resource sharing in graduate and professional education in the West by providing information about these programs throughout the region. The project is establishing an information system that will enable higher education decision makers to plan for the future of graduate and professional education from a regional perspective. The graduate education project is supported by a two-year grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York and by WICHE state dues through its Student Exchange Program.

The project seeks to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of graduate education in the West so that both students and taxpayers are better served.

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A STATE HIGHER EDUCATION AGENCY VIEW OF PLANNING AND REVIEW OF GRADUATE EDUCATION

Patrick M. Callan
Director
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Remarks to the Western Association of Graduate Schools, March 5, 1978, Santa Barbara, California

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A STATE HIGHER EDUCATION AGENCY VIEW OF PLANNING AND REVIEW OF GRADUATE EDUCATION

Patrick M. Callan

During the past few years, graduate education has emerged as a major issue in statewide planning and coordination. In many states, the subject has aroused public interest and generated widespread discussion, often controversy. The debate now involves not only institutions and state higher education agencies, but also legislatures and, in some states, even the executive branch.

It is vitally important that all of us in the higher education community, whatever our roles, maintain some kind of dialogue, whatever our differing points of view. I appreciate the opportunity you have provided today for me to talk with you about graduate education from the standpoint of statewide planning.

Most states now have some type of higher education board, commission or council. Their authority or power varies widely, from consolicated governing boards, such as those in New York and Florida, to advisory coordinating agencies, such as those in California and Washington. In the latter two states, the coordinating agency is charged with responsibility for long-range, comprehensive planning for all postsecondary institutions--public and private, academic and

vocational, two-year and four-year. These agencies are also responsible for analyzing and evaluating policy alternatives or options; and for providing the legislative and executive branches of government, as well as the institutions, with an independent, nonpartisan, and sensitive perspective on public policy decisions which affect higher education.

Another major responsibility has been that of program review, both graduate and undergraduate, academic and vocational. For many years, our efforts were directed primarily at determining the need for more new programs at all levels, and planning rationally and efficiently for the escalating growth in enrollment and student demand. Now, however, we have begun to examine not only the need for establishing new programs, but also the justification for existing programs.

Our coordinating bodies have often been assigned the thankless task of being the messenger who brings the bad news. For example, in many states the discussion of declining and steady-state enrollments initially took place within the context of a statewide master plan, rather than at the institutional level. The coordinating boards have served as an intermediary in identifying impending legislative concerns and questions about the educational enterprise, its plans and priorities. From time to time, we have been successful in eliciting institutional response to problems in advance of legislative mandates.

Although we approach the world of graduate education from a statewide perspective, we share similar concerns. Whether looking at new or existing graduate programs, we tend to emphasize the question of need. More than anything else, we want to be sure that graduate programs can be justified in terms of the needs and interests of the society which is going to have to support them. Our approach to program review reflects both a liability and an asset. On the one hand, we lack the special understanding and knowledge that comes from "hands on" involvement in graduate education. On the other, we are not constrained by internal constituencies, vested institutional interests, and academic politics. The fact that our perspectives on graduate education may differ in certain respects can create a stimulating and constructive tension with the educational community.

We seem reluctant to acknowledge or to discuss certain tensions between higher education agencies and institutions which arise from changes in public attitudes toward institutions of all kinds. For example, the growth in the number of statewide higher education agencies during the past fifteen or so years reflects, to some extent, an increasing public and legislative concern for "accountability" in the spending of tax dollars. The coordinating agency represents in part an attempt to create an effective and independent system of checks and balances within higher education.

I also detect a general decline in the once-traditional deference paid to members of the academic community, both by the public and by legislators. This is part of a broader trend, one in which professionals in all fields--medicine and law, to name two--are being viewed with less awe and more skepticism. The increasing number of professional and occupational licensure boards on which lay members predominate is one illustration of this trend.

With that brief introduction to the world of statewide planning and coordination, I would like to talk about a few of the issues that are now, or soon will be, matters of mutual concern to all of us and to the legislative and executive branches of government.

It is important to note that most of these issues are "environmentally imposed"--the result of fiscal restraints, diminishing resources, student demographics, and changing priorities. They do not reflect a punitive attitude towards higher education, as was the case during the period of campus unrest in the sixties. Ironically, this fact actually makes our present situation more difficult, since we cannot deal with the issues in the comforting context of good against evil or in terms of those who are "for" higher education versus those who are "against" it. The issues we face today involve basic questions about the structure and governance of higher education, and are matters of very real concern to society and state government as well.

The first, and most frequently discussed, of these issues bears directly on graduate education. Are we providing too many programs and producing too many graduates? Can we justify the public cost to the taxpayer and the human cost to the unemployed or underemployed graduate? The question is not whether graduate education is "good" or "bad," per se, but whether these programs represent the best use of increasingly scarce public resources. Public and legislative concern over this issue is growing rapidly and action is being called for.

The fact that we must now face is that graduate education has grown faster than warranted by the demand for it and the resources available to support it. We can no longer justify the number, the array, and the cost of all the programs we are offering. Some limits have to be imposed, and we should be the ones to impose them, not the legislative or executive branches. To do this we are first going to have to ask ourselves which programs are essential, which truly serve the best interests of our students, our institutions, and our states. Then, we are going to have to ask what is to be done with those programs which do not pass this screening.

The second issue is the priority we assign to graduate education and research. We must convey effectively to the general public the critical importance of advanced study and research in terms of both educational and social benefits. At the same time, we must also

respond to those who argue that we have been carried away in our efforts to expand higher education during the past twenty years, and that we have come to overemphasize the importance of graduate education. I think we do need to place renewed emphasis on the quality of undergraduate instruction.

A third issue concerns the question of educational quality, both the quality of our programs and the quality of our students. It is frequently implied that quality is a matter of concern only to institutions, not to state educational agencies or governments. This allegation is not accurate or fair. Neither I nor most of my colleagues are slaves of "cost effectiveness" and "program budgeting." In a period of constraint and limited resources, our concern is to protect the quality of institutions and programs that have been so carefully nurtured and strengthened over the years. When circumstances demand that cuts be made, we will seek out those marginal programs whose continued support represents a threat to the maintenance of quality. If those of us in the academic community and state government can work together, I believe we not only can make a vital contribution to the continued well-being of higher education, but also preserve and enhance the quality of our educational programs and the quality of life in our society as well.

The fourth major issue relates not only to graduate education but to the entire educational enterprise. How do we maintain the flex-

ibility necessary to respond positively to the needs of society and the interests and aspirations of our students in a period when declining resources and enrollments counsel retrenchment and encourage retreat? The answer is, I think, fairly obvious. We must convince those who pay our way that our programs and activities are responsive to public needs and therefore deserve public support. We must also find better mechanisms for reallocating resources internally to assure support for quality programs that are socially desirable and needed, not simply esoteric and prestigious.

There are also some special problems which are going to command our attention and energies during the next five to ten years. First, there are a number of institutions which I might describe as being in a state of "arrested development." These are institutions in which departments and programs were established on the assumption that growth and expansion would be a permanent condition in higher education. I fear that they are doomed to disappointment. The aspirations of many institutions and the expectations of many faculty and departments, which developed in the context of growth, must yield to the realities of the eighties. We now need to look carefully at our concept of institutional mission, and to define it on the basis of the service the institution can provide to the public, not merely in terms of aspirations to status and prestige of its faculty and administration.

The second special problem is the need for interinstitutional and interstate cooperation to maximize our educational resources and meet the needs of students. In that respect, a discussion among graduate deans I listened to earlier in this meeting was not terribly encouraging. The subject was a proposal which might cut across state lines to provide students with access to many programs not available to them now, which might waive nonresident tuition in the interests of access, and which might lower some of the artificial barriers to access that have nothing to do with educational quality or autonomy. Yet, I heard many who apparently supported that concept saying they did not want to be involved if personal time and energy were required to lobby such a proposal through the legislature. I hope that in the future there will be more openness to concepts of this kind, as a result of your efforts.

A third problem, and one which often generates more heat than light, is the use of manpower supply and demand projections in educational planning. This is not an issue to be debated in the abstract. We know that there are good data for some fields, inadequate data for others. We need to try to reach agreement on what is usable and how it can be used. We cannot dismiss out of hand the argument that our educational programs should provide some direct and tangible benefits to the students who go through them and to the society which funds them. At the same time, we must avoid looking to some sterile, mechanical formula for a long-term solution to this problem.

I would like to conclude with several general observations, again on perhaps a more philosophical level. On the basis of my experience, I believe that almost everyone in state government--whether in the legislature, the finance department, the governor's office, or even the higher education agency--prefers very strongly that the primary focus of educational decision making remain at the institutional or systemwide levels. At the same time, each state has a legitimate concern about the array and number of educational programs offered by public institutions, about their quality and effectiveness, and about the efficiency of their operation. That concern can best be satisfied by institutional policies and practices which clearly demonstrate a thoughtful use of public funds and a responsiveness to expressed public needs and interests.

With few exceptions, we in state government still desire to defer to your judgment on matters of educational quality. (I continue to be impressed, and sometimes surprised, at how true this is even among legislators.) Increased centralization, with more and more educational decisions being made in the state capital, is not an objective of state policy makers. On the other hand, however, state government does not allow a vacuum in decision-making to exist for any length of time. If our educational institutions or systems are reluctant to make the necessary, and often difficult, policy decisions the times call for, the state higher education agency will be the first choice for that role. After that, it will be the

legislatures, budget offices and the governors. The danger with such involvement at the political level is primarily that the decision-making tools are not very refined or sophisticated. In fact, the higher up you go in the political system, the more often the only tool available is the meat ax. That approach makes for neither good public policy nor good educational policy.

In order to avoid that possibility, you are going to have to make "trade-offs" which you may not like. As many of you may be aware, I participated in a rather traumatic review of graduate programs in the State of Washington. It was a process marked by strong disagreements at every step: disagreements about data, philosophy, autonomy, jurisdiction--almost everything. It was not, I assure you, a pleasant experience, either for the institutions or the state's higher education agency. By the same token, the result produced an immediate payoff. At the time, a legislative committee was proposing the establishment of sunset laws that would apply to academic programs. Because of our review process, I was able to assure the committee that there was no vacuum in the decision-making process in higher education, that problems either had been or were being resolved by the institutions and the state agency. Consequently, legislators were much more restrained in their approach to the "sunset" concept than I believe they otherwise would have been.

In all candor, I suspect--and I think many of you would agree--that within a decade there will be fewer students and fewer programs in higher education in most of the western states. If that is the world in which we are going to have to live, there are two questions, the answers to which will be very important ten years from now. First, will we have succeeded in maintaining or expanding the high quality program that we have developed over the past twenty-five years? Second, will major decisions on educational policy be made, and most of the control kept, at the institutional level, or will state agencies, state budget offices, and legislatures be directly involved?

The answers to these two questions will depend largely on the quality of institutional leadership forthcoming in the years ahead. The future and the fate of our institutions will depend as much upon what you do as it will on what happens at the state capital. At the state level, there is still a desire to defer to your judgment, and there continues to be a great residual respect, sometimes even awe, for educators, even though it may not be readily apparent during the annual budget process.

During the past few years, I have been involved with higher education agencies in three western states. In each of them, a critical factor in the political environment for higher education has been the concept of public service. Your programs and policies must be justified in

terms of your ability to provide improved services to the public which supports you. They cannot be justified in terms of academic privilege, faculty morale, insititutional tradition, or in terms of what you may believe is a prior commitment to you on society's part. As I look back on our review of graduate programs in Washington, the most distressing part of that experience was not the conflict which was generated--I fully expected that. Rather, I was deeply disappointed by the rationale offered by institutions for retaining programs which our agency believed they should, for good reasons, phase out. Their oppositon was couched in terms of faculty morale, institutional prestige, etc.

There is no interest on the part of any legislature, governor, or state agency with which I am familiar to provide funds for those reasons. The overwhelming attitude, which I share, is that public programs are supported for the overall public's benefit, not for that of those who are employed to offer those programs. This does not mean that faculty morale or institutional quality are not important considerations. It means that they alone are not sufficient justification for any particular program at any particular time.

In the next few years, you are going to be asked more and harder questions by legislators and state agencies. I hope you will view such questions as opportunities, rather than as criticisms of yourselves and your institutions--opportunities to justify the quality

of your educational offerings and the soundness of your policies and decisions. The external pressures which you face can also provide the necessary impetus for an honest reassessment of institutional performance, an opportunity to evaluate what has been done and to determine what needs to be done.

Those who ask the most difficult questions are often those most deeply committed to our educational enterprise. They care enough to take risks for it--internally, within our institutions; externally, in the political arena. Each of us, at the state and institutional levels, care deeply about the future of graduate education and the future of higher education. Our common goal should be to assure that our states have both the quantity and quality of graduate education they deserve and need.

Thank you very much.

PROJECT ON EXPANDING REGIONAL COOPERATION IN GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

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